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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003426

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/04/2033
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: TENSION AND VIOLENCE IN WESTERN XINJIANG

REF: A. A) BEIJING 2864
[1](#)B. B) FBIS CPP20080815480002

Classified By: Classified by Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlso
n. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: New security measures were evident during PolOffs' August 25-29 trip to southwestern Xinjiang, the site of at least four incidents of ethnic violence in August, but the overall security environment during the first days of PolOffs' trip appeared more lax than on a July 17-21 trip to the same region, with fewer checkpoints and no visible military presence outside of bases. Reports of widespread arrests in both Kashgar and Hotan could not be confirmed. Following an August 27 incident in Jiashi that reportedly resulted in the deaths of two ethnic Uighur policemen, however, the security environment tightened dramatically. PolOffs on August 28-29 observed a beating, many checkpoints, a heavy police presence and the temporary closing of Jiashi city to outsiders. End Summary.

Visit to Xinjiang

[1](#)2. (C) PolOffs traveled to southwestern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region August 25-29 and gathered information through informal conversations with local residents. PolOffs did not seek Provincial Foreign Affairs assistance on the trip, and no meetings with officials took place.

Kashgar: New Physical Security after Attacks

[1](#)3. (C) Some police and Government buildings in Kashgar (Mandarin: Kashi) appeared to have strengthened physical security following the August 4 attack on border police in Kashgar that reportedly killed 16 officers. The security improvements included both professional and makeshift tire puncture devices as well as new vehicle barriers. Multiple new security measures, many seemingly arbitrary and ineffective, were in place throughout the city. Beginning on August 4, we were told, authorities have allowed only vehicles' drivers (whose name and ID number are recorded) to enter gas stations. All passengers must disembark outside the stations. Hotel staff are required to inspect guests' baggage before giving out room keys. Security staff lackadaisically searched just one of PolOff's two bags as he entered the bus station. The greatest increase in physical security was outside the police station where the August 4 attacks reportedly occurred. A Han Chinese cab driver claimed attackers chose that police station because in the past police regularly took their morning march outside, making them an easy target.

Despite Security Upgrades, Environment More Relaxed

[1](#)4. (C) Despite increased physical security measures, the

overall environment in Kashgar in the first days of PolOffs' visit was more relaxed than during PolOffs' July 17-21 visit to Xinjiang (ref A). While the physical structures of highway checkpoints were still in place, only one was manned on the eight-hour drive from Kashgar to Hotan (Mandarin: Hetian). Previously, People's Armed Police (PAP) had manned the highway checkpoints and guarded the Urumqi bus station, but on this trip regular police had taken over the security duties. Even the checkpoint into closed PLA garrison town Yengisheher was unmanned, despite it being the site of July 9 public executions that fanned local anger (ref A). Police visible in Kashgar were neither particularly numerous nor well-armed. No large-scale military presence was noted. An ethnic Uighur resident of Hotan commented that since the start of the Olympics Chinese soldiers had remained in their barracks. When asked why, he responded that it was because Uighurs are "too tough."

Rumors but No Signs of a Major Crackdown

15. (C) Despite Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan's August 13 speech describing the current situation in Xinjiang as a "life or death struggle" (ref B), streets and markets were bustling and full of people both during the day and into the evening. Daily life, including mosque attendance, appeared normal. Some locals spoke of many arrests in Kashgar following the attacks but offered few details. A few new propaganda banners encouraging vigilance against terrorism stretched over the roads leading from Kashgar to Hotan and from Kashgar to Tashkorgan. New security measures require that locals apply for a "transportation permit" to gain

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access to the greater Tashkorgan area, and require foreigners to travel with a tour guide.

Security in Kuqa Similar, Despite Earlier Attacks

16. (C) A British reporter for the Economist (protect) told PolOffs in Kashgar on August 28 that the security atmosphere was even more relaxed in Kuqa (alternate spelling Kucha, Mandarin Kuche), the site of several explosions in the early morning of August 10. He said he saw no roving police patrols during the day but noted that the police patrol the streets at night in open-topped jeeps. He encountered many fewer checkpoints than he expected. Like in Kashgar, locals in Kuqa reported widespread arrests following the attacks, he said. The reporter said Chinese security personnel aggressively followed him during his first day in Kuqa, but said that the overt tailing ceased once he was contacted by a representative from the local press office, who offered to arrange interviews. The reporter described the August 10 attacks in Kuqa as "random acts of hillbilly terrorism." He noted the ineffectiveness of throwing explosive devices at 2:00 in the morning, and said that what little damage had been done has since been cleaned up. An official from the Kuqa Ministry of Tourism, the only department to grant the reporter an interview, told him that the incident was a random attack not connected to a broader terror struggle, and was not associated with any of the other recent attacks in Xinjiang.

Attack in Jiashi Drastically Changes Security Environment

17. (C) Following the reported killing in Jiashi (Uighur: Peyzawat) on August 27 of two ethnic Uighur policemen engaged in a search for those connected with the previous incidents of violence, security in southwestern Xinjiang increased dramatically. Over 10 checkpoints were in place and fully manned between Hotan and Kashgar August 28, compared with only one when PolOffs traveled the opposite direction the previous day. At one checkpoint, PolOff observed a mid-20s ethnic Uighur male dragged from a bus by his hair and beaten

by checkpoint security personnel. The British journalist told PolOfs that he attempted to enter Jiashi August 28 and was turned away at a police checkpoint. He said the police had photographs of four suspects wanted in connection with the August 12 checkpoint stabbing in Yamanya outside Kashgar that killed three and injured one; he did not see any photographs of individuals sought in connection with the August 27 incident in Jiashi. The bus station in Kashgar that services Jiashi was closed August 28 with dozens of people milling around outside, many of whom confirmed that "an incident" had taken place in Jiashi. Some spoke of rumors that Jiashi would remain closed for three days while the investigation took place. Taxi drivers outside the bus station said that it was possible to enter the city only by paying a US 70-cent bribe per passenger per checkpoint to police.

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